THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) The Union Government have decided to create a non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources for the development of all the seven North-Eastern States and Sikkim for taking up specific programmes/projects/schemes in these States.

(b) The modalities of the Pool are to be worked out.

(c) The creation of non-lapsable Central Pool is likely to improve the funding pattern of the developmental activities in the North Eastern States and Sikkim. The extent of additional funding would be known after the Central Government's regular Budget for 1998-99 is finalised.

Economic Package for North-Eastern States

250. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI N.R. DASARI:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether an economic package was announced by the previous UF Government for North-Eastern States;

(b) if so, the details of that package and how far it has been implemented; and

(c) the present Government's view on the continuation of this package?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Former Prime Minister Shri H.D. Deve Gowda had announced on 27th October, 1996 an economic package for North East entitled "New initiatives for North Eastern Region". The details of this package and the status of its implementation are given at Annexure [*See* Appendix 184. Annexure Nos. 3 and 4]. Some additional features to this package were announced b the then Prime Minister Shri I.K. Gujral in May, 1997. Its details alongwith the status report of implementation is given at annexure. [*See* Appendix 784 Annexure No. 5]

(c) Package would be continued.

Budgetary Support for North-Eastern States

251. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether he has recently unveiled a plan for North-East development;

(b) if so, the salient features of such plan;

(c) whether PMO has since issued instructions to all Central Ministries/Departments to keep aside 10% of their respective budgets earmarked exclusively for North-eastern Sector, if so, the amount likely to be kept as Central pool for the area during 1998-99; and

(d) whether Government proposed to waive the loan to North-eastern States as done in the case of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab by previous Government, if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY PRARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) The Prime Minister met the Chief Ministers of North-Eastern States and Sikkim on 8 May, 1998 to discuss issues relating to accelerated development of these States. The steps to be taken by the Government in this regard included, inter-alia, adoption of project approach for which projects would be identified in

consultation with the State Governments and North-Eestern Counicl (NEC), creation of a Central Pool of Resources for funding specific projects in the North-Eastern States and Sikkim for which necessary steps have been tkaen to propose the opening of budget head in the Central Government's budget proposals for the year 1998-99, and resturcturing NEC so that it can play more active role in the economic and social transformation of these States.

(c) The Prime Minister's Office has not issued such instructions since the meeting of the Chief Ministers of the North Eastern States and Sikkim with the Prime Minister held on 8 May, 1998.

(d) There is no proposal as such to waive off loan of Nroth-Eastern States under consideration of the Government.

Some of the North-Eastern States like Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram re presented to the Government of India in the past for writing off of the loans outstanding aginst their States. The requests were, however, not acceded to. The North-Eastern States, being the Special Category States, receive Normal Plan Assistance in the form of 90% grant and 10% loan, as against the Non-Special Category States who receive it as 70% loan and 30% grant. Thus, the repayment liability of North-eastern States is much less than that of Non-Special Category States. Repayment of loan and interest thereon from the States is taken as receipts in the Central Budget. Writing off of the loan would decrease the receipts of the Centre and will adversely affect its capabilities to give further assistance to States.

Finance Commission are the appropriate Constitutional body to take decision regarding loan waiver after taking into account all aspect of States' and Centre's finances. The Tenth Finance Commission recommended writing off of 5% of the repayment due with respect to fresh loan received during 1990—95 and outstanding upto 31.03.1995 in respect of all North-Eastern States. The North-Eastern States are getting relief accordingly. The matter relating to waiving off of loan will also be taken in to account by the Eleventh Finance Commission, to be constituted shortly, within the framework of their terms of reference.

Japanese Report on Space Tourism

252. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the recent Japanese Report regarding "Space Tourism".

(b) if so, what are the salient features of the report;

(c) if not, whether Government would like to call for the information/report;

(d) whether it is also a fact that the ISRO is exploring the possibility of providing support for International Space Station; and

(e) what is the present position in respect of Space Transportation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There have been various Aerospace news bulletins and articles which appeared in Journals referring to future possibilites on Space Tourism. The thoughts emerging on Space Tourism are connected with possible visits of people to be in orbit for pleasure, exploration of conducting experiments.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) ISRO has been studying opportunities for conducting scientific and technological experiments in the International Space Station through the participating nations.

(e) There are two kinds of Space Transportation today. They are Expendable Launch Vehicles and Partially. Reusable Space Shuttle. They are essentially used for orbiting satellites and manned missions.